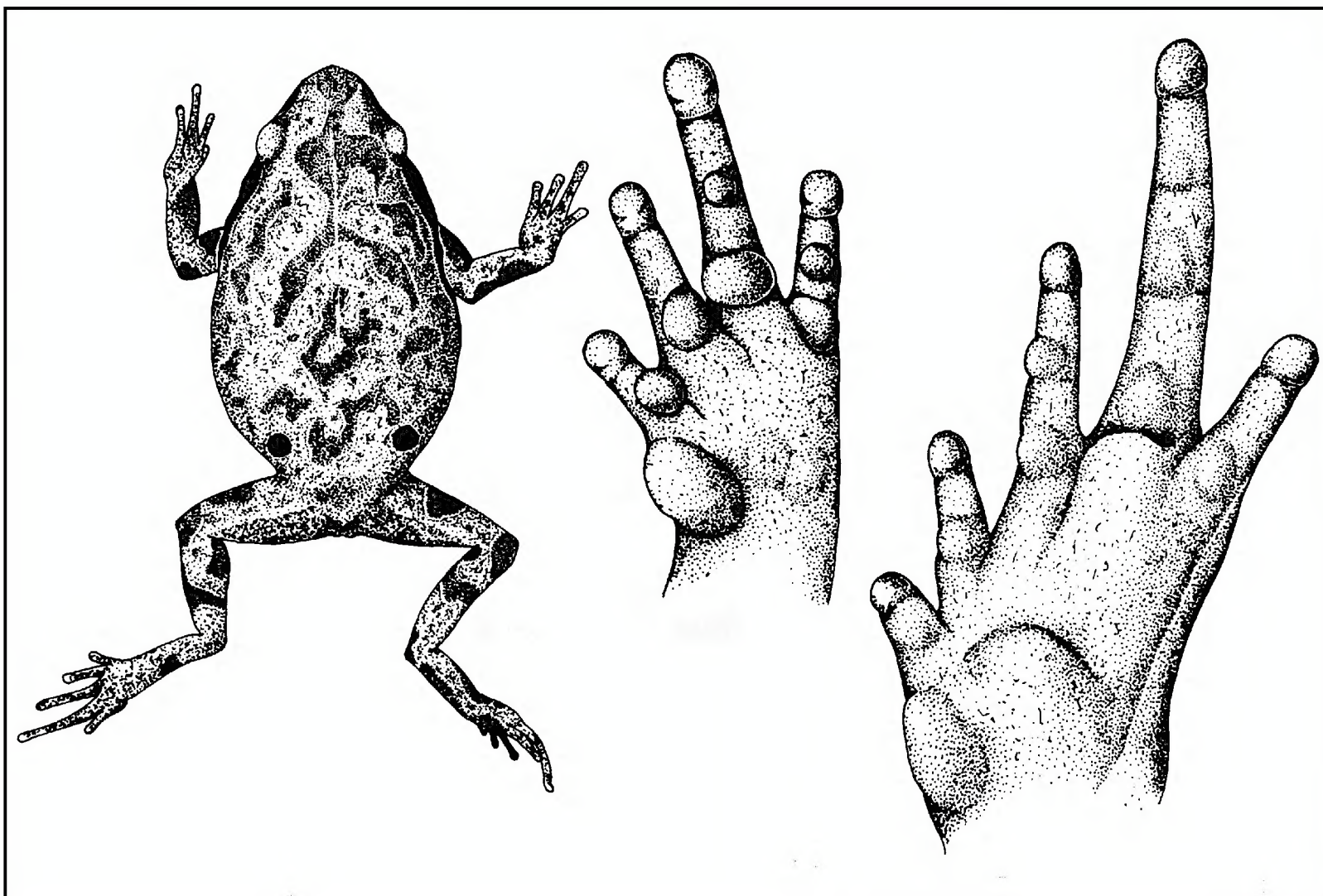

BULLETIN

of the

Chicago Herpetological Society



Volume 45, Number 9
September 2010



BULLETIN OF THE CHICAGO HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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I Smell... ADVENTURE!

by Y. Tom Rajan

Jasper's Snake-hunting Sixth Sense

Muthan casually pulled out a six-foot ratsnake like he knew it would be right there. We had been out for hours, so it was amazing to me that he'd just stop at some random point and pluck it out of the low foliage. Best I could do to cross the language barrier, I asked how he knew where it was. He took me back ten feet and pointed to a sort of "elbow" mark in the sand. Firstly, it seemed insane to be able to pick that out. Then secondly, it actually seemed insane to overlook it—what else would make that kind of mark?



A ratsnake leaves obvious signs . . . to the man who knows how to look.

Field herpetologists would love to be tuned in to their environment like that. But how do you develop a Snake Hunting Sixth Sense? How do you learn to hear the whispers and read clues of the wilderness?

We all want to be the first to spot a snake. We all want to innately know the right time and place and temperature to find them. But there are a few problems with this ambition.

First off, you can't just expect to be at one with an environment if you're an outsider. One of the best snake catchers I met in East Africa was a yellow-eyed drunk of a tribesman. Palm wine aside, he knew his way around the bush. But he was a *tribesman*. Wishing you had his skills is like wishing you spoke better Spanish, but never having lived in Spain! I guess what I'm saying is that if you want to have the keen senses of a 50-year-old bushman, you have to spend 50 years in the bush.



Stripe-bellied sand snake (*Psammophis subtaeniatus*)

But also, I'm not really sure that this sixth sense even exists. I know how the best snake hunters in the world do it and quite frankly it is a bit un-glorious and disappointing, as adventure stories go. There are tried-and-true methods like spotlighting on the road just after dark. Then there is the simple statistical approach of attacking with numbers for surveys and such, getting as many eyes in the field for as many hours as possible. Additionally, local help is always key. Quite often researchers in remote places put out a "bounty" for anyone who can lead them to a live and unmolested snake. I have a friend who spent months in the mountains in India at a coffee plantation. He offered a few hundred rupees for locals to keep an eye out during their normal working day . . . the snakes came to him!

Lastly, not everything is as well defined as we would like. There are definitely certain micro patterns. I know from my own short experience that there is a tendency of anacondas to bask on the steep clay river banks, during hot days that follow rainy nights in the Pantanal. They're trying to warm up. But ask an old-timer river guide if that is any kind of guarantee and you'll probably get a laugh. One time you will see ten snakes in a few hours and then another time you will see nothing for a week.



Yellow anaconda (*Eunectes notaeus*)

But even with serious scientific methods as applied by serious scientists (which I am **not**), I personally don't believe everything is all that straightforward and knowable.

The principles of "bad science" are all around us. It is a running joke between my wife and me that whenever we go somewhere new, we make immediate and grand assumptions about the place. That's human nature. When we landed in Morocco, the little Agadir airport was utterly empty. "North Africa is nice, but there sure aren't a lot of people that live

there.” It was sprinkling in France when we arrived. “France is nice, but it sure rains a lot.” By the way, “Everybody in the USA is a football fan, has a swimming pool, and hates snakes.”

Okay—if you see a snake in a certain area twice, then surely that is the beginnings of a valid pattern. It must be a good environment and I’d agree that this raises your odds for a third sighting. But if you *never* saw one there again, that wouldn’t surprise me either.

It has been my experience that the universe does not often graciously follow rules and patterns that serve our own convenience or understanding. Naturally, after a two-hour trip when we spot ten snakes, we then theorize and summarize about the reasons why. But I’m not sure we really know all that much about it, and sheer luck is always a strong factor.

Now let’s throw out everything I’ve said so far. Because, on the other hand, there is **something** to be learned for sure.

Hunting for snakes, certainly hunting for anything, is not something you learn in a half-hour walk on the 0.6-mile nature trail loop through the woods at your local city park.

It takes patience on many levels. As measured in hours, it takes patience when you are out in the field. The standard I have always heard is that if you hike for a full day of 6 or 8 hours, then one snake sighting is just about a good pace. I have a friend who was hired as the local guide for a *National Geographic* crew for 19 days in the jungle and they never saw ONE snake! As measured in months, it takes patience. I’ve been wanting to spot a massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*) for the past 3 years, but realistically, I might only go out every other week during the summer. That’s a total of only 6 hikes per year. Finally, as measured in years, it just takes patience.



Massasauga, *Sistrurus catenatus*. This is not my photo because I’ve **never** seen one. (Photograph courtesy of Mike Redmer)

At its core, the most important skill is about listening. You must be quiet, observant, and studious. But instead people are often bumbling, twig snapping, loudmouth buffoons out in the woods. My guess is that the deer sleeping under cover of a bush in daytime hours must roll their eyes when they hear us from a mile away, thinking of us as ridiculous and dangerous.

I never really understood why people go fishing. Um—you can find all the fish you want at the store. But then recently, a light bulb came on. Snake hunting, bow hunting, fishing, what-

ever—they’re all good ways to escape your daily life. Let your mind go quiet, wander and relax. It is a desire to understand other worlds and mysterious creatures. It is almost meditative.

In particular, I love canoeing. It is so quiet and noninvasive. What could be more in harmony, metaphorically and literally, than floating down a river?

A few years back I was in South Carolina with my daughter, hunting for alligators. As we canoed along, the gators always seemed to see us first. Coming around a bend, we would hear a loud splash and that was that. It was gone.

Then we had several instances where an alligator would slowly rise up through the murky water for air. My guess is that as it broke the surface, it saw us in the boat and took off in a violent burst. All we knew was that it was silent, we paddled, then suddenly the water would explode. It was as much water as a chubby suburban dad cannon-balling at the local pool, but yet more of a thrashing sound. My daughter screamed and cried the first few times. I burst out laughing as a nervous reaction, but it freaked me out as well. After a while we got used to it.

But as the hours passed, we got even quieter. No more banging of the paddles on the side of the boat. All movements were slow and deliberate. Then we reached a sort of “crossing over” point. The tables were turned and we were seeing the wildlife first. An owl turned to watch us with suspicion, but didn’t move. We got to within 20 yards of a few deer that had no clue we were there. My daughter whispered, “Boo” and they took off in a hilarious Keystone Cop-style panic.

Then we had the experience I shall remember forever. My daughter’s eyes bulged and she pointed desperately in hushed excitement. She saw a large gator basking on a log with its eyes closed.

This one satisfied all of her wishes. All day she’d been having trouble spotting gators that I pointed out before they slunk away into the water. But this was her own discovery. She’d also been a little scared about it all. But it was out in the open where she could see, so she was feeling safe and in control. We were right up close before it realized we were there. We got the “money” shot photograph that is now forever a postcard in my mind.



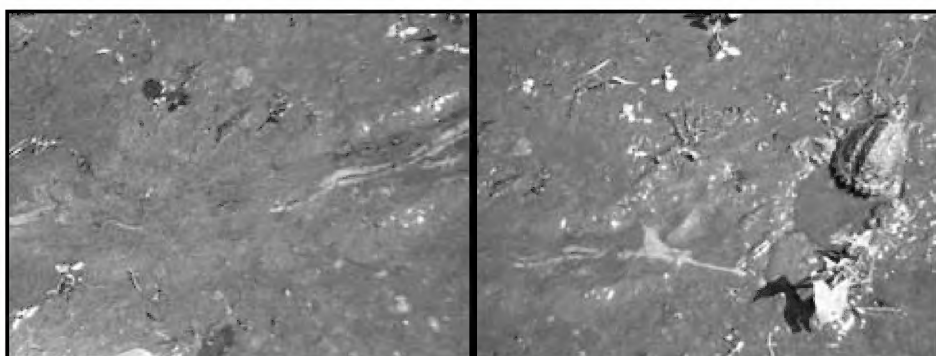
You know you’re being quiet when you can sneak up on a reptile..

Another time, my boys and I were out in the woods not too far from home. The alarm call went up from my son, “Snake!” The average person may not have noticed what happened next, but for me, it almost brought a proud tear to my eye. I looked over to see my son was scanning the tall grass frantically trying to see the snake. He had *heard* it. He was tuned in to the distinctive slow sliding noise that snakes make, and so he heard it before he saw it. A moment later he tracked it down and caught it. He’s getting his bush sense. I know what a nerd I am for saying it, but it was one of my proudest moments in life.



Listen close and you will find!

Last year I took my sons out for a two-day canoe trip. We had a grand time. Midway through the first day the wildlife was not coming at us fast and furious. So we started to get serious about “hunting” for turtles. Soon we came to a part of the river where half its width was a murky, muddy, vegetation-ey mess with a sloping bank up to the grass. I said that it looked like a perfect place for turtles and we must see something there. We all got out and slowly investigated inch by inch. Almost right away we picked up some very odd markings. It looked like a mini-bulldozer had pushed through the mud with a little string dragging behind. It couldn’t be that easy really, right? Jasper carefully followed the tracks in the direction they seemed to go. Then after 20 or 30 yards he stopped dead and pondered. He was saying: “They end right here and there is kind of a bump in the mud, but . . .,” when at that very moment, a snapping turtle poked its head up out of the mud. Jasper pounced and pulled it out. Totally incredible. How lucky is that to find actual turtle tracks, follow them, and find the animal still right there?



Fresh snapping turtle tracks.

The end of the tracks.



Jasper with his catch.

But now this next incident may trash my credibility completely and make me sound like a yarn-spinning sailor who caught “the big one.”

A few hours later on that same canoe trip we were all relaxed just floating along. I sat up and said, “Hey, that smells like Crick.” I was referring to the same stink of our lizard when a cage cleaning was overdue. I pulled the canoe to the side and looked around. How very strange. Now we were all on high alert looking in all directions moving the canoe ten yards at a time. We soon joined up with a small river off-shoot from the right. Looking back up-stream on a hard angle where it came from, sure enough, there was a log with a bunch of turtles basking. It was well shielded from the main river and we never would have seen them if we had just cruised along past.

Yes, what I am telling you is that, outrageous as it sounds, we once tracked wild turtles by sense of smell!

Ok, so anybody that knows reptile waste can tell you that it is a pretty strong aroma. The log was pretty caked-on, so I can hardly claim the Bloodhound Award. But still, it makes a darn good story, doesn’t it? And on a serious note, it does speak to exactly the concept of paying attention skills that I’ve been talking about.

There are not many specific clues to Jasper’s Snake-hunting Sixth Sense that I know for sure. I will say that you should not focus too much on the exact thing you’re looking for, but rather the stuff around it. As a former president of the Michigan Herp Society told me a few times, “Know your environment, know your species.” Dang—I hate plants. But the local flora is a big thing he keys off of. My eyes roll as he tells me to look along the bog where you see a line of rhodaphicrus-leaved heproderms. Coming at it from another direction, I know 100% for sure that snakes eat frogs. It must take a lot of frogs to feed each snake. So maybe once you’ve seen 20 frogs, then you know you’re probably in a good snake area.

Often the best opportunity to study an animal’s habits is simply overlooked. I’m referring to the time when you *release* it. I’m not saying you have to handle everything you see, and I surely don’t. But if you do catch a snake, for example, pay attention when you let it go. Listen closely to its sound in the leaves. Watch its escape strategy, what it does, and where it runs to. Have someone walk past to see if it freezes in place or

flees. Track it as long as you can before you lose sight of it. To me, this is the perfect way to fine tune your eyes and ears.

It starts with a love of the journey and not some paydirt checklist. I've heard of birders with life-lists who just want to make eye contact with a certain species and then move on to the next. It is all about the numbers. That's just vanity. But then there are also many birders who have a grand fascination for all living things, but maybe birds are their favorite. These are the guys I want to hang with. For this reason I make a disappointing field herpetologist. I get too easily distracted for an hour by some really fascinating hot-dog sized caterpillar that looks cute...but has spines that stab like the dickens!



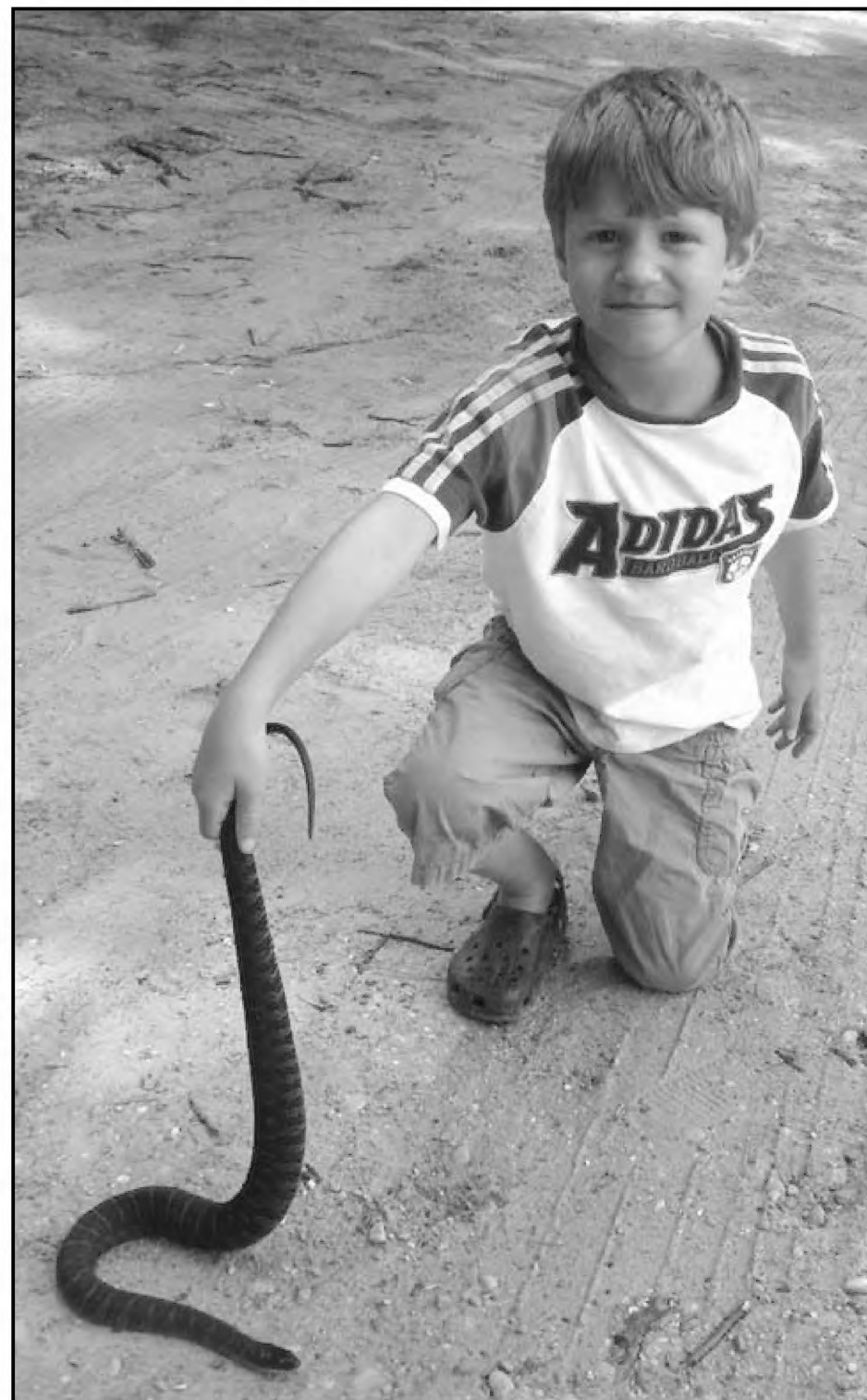
It's just a roly-poly caterpillar.

Ouch!!!

Like most things, I don't think there is one rule. You have to pay attention and figure it out. It differs with each area and species. All sources of info serve as good evidence: field guides, herp books, TV shows, advice from colleagues, local people, your own past experiences, etc, etc. But none is absolute.

I've always wanted to have some super power to read the environment and be at one with the bush. At my best I have, for a moment, achieved that.

One thing is for sure about snake hunting though. If you don't enjoy walking in the woods for the sheer beauty of it alone, then you're a fool.



Tom lives in southeast Michigan with his wife and three children. He travels for work as well as for play, and chases snakes wherever possible in either case. Next, he and his son Jasper are taking a trip to Brazil to hunt for the freaky looking mata mata turtle (Chelus fimbriatus).

Please feel free to contact the author for more info at yTomRajan@hotmail.com. As he likes to say, "I Smell . . . ADVENTURE!"

What You Missed at the August Meeting

John Archer
j-archer@sbcglobal.net

I suppose I would be somewhat depressed if I were in George Heinrich's position. Like most people involved in conservation, George continually fights losing battles, but George is a pragmatist. On occasion he actually succeeds, and that is what motivates him to continue. George is a field biologist and educator who graduated from Memphis State University and returned to his home state of Florida with a sense that he wanted to give back something to the state and the state's wildlife that he so obviously loves. And he does give back, nearly every day and in many ways. I didn't know George, and I wasn't able to meet him at the airport or escort him to some of Chicago's local sites as I am often honored to do, but when I first met him at the meeting he immediately impressed me as modest and focused. While he never bragged, his talk quietly included many of his efforts to conserve Florida's wildlife—mostly turtles—some successful, some not. His talk was titled "Florida Turtles: Conservation Challenges and Opportunities."

With beautiful photos of Florida habitat, George explained why the state is so significant for turtle conservation. Florida has a wide variety of habitats that support over 8% of the world's known turtle species and the U.S. Southeast is the second richest center of global diversity for turtles, behind only Southeast Asia. Eighteen of Florida's 25 turtle species need conservation attention. Pictures of a few of those species ap-



Photograph of George Heinrich by Dick Buchholz.

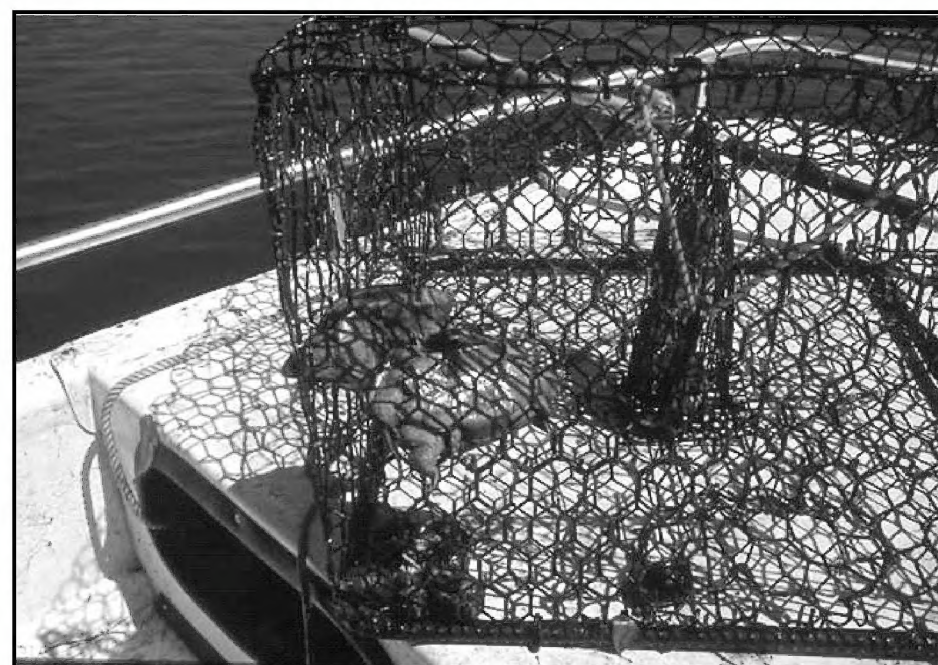
peared on the screen. Threats to the turtles include a familiar list for those of us who have been following these animals. Habitat loss and degradation, mortality on roads, collection for human consumption, predation, and the establishment of non-native species are threatening turtles all over the world, and Florida is no exception. George made the point that all of these threats result from hu-

man activities. He used his research on two of Florida's species, the diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*) and the Suwannee cooter (*Pseudemys concinna suwanniensis*), to demonstrate threats and the actions that can reduce them.

With Florida representing one-fifth of the diamondbacks' entire range and home to five of the seven subspecies, the state is critical to the conservation of that species. Hardening of shorelines to protect buildings and land has decreased the nesting grounds available and broken up the potential for genetic mixing between populations. Predation by subsidized predators, primarily raccoons, accounts for huge losses not only for nests but also, as graphic pictures showed, breeding adults. George mentioned how one project removed all raccoons from an island and that year nearly all the nests hatched, but the next year the raccoons had moved back and most of the nests did not hatch. Unfortunately predator control to be effective must be continuous. Non-native feral hogs and fire ants can have devastating consequences on nests and hatchlings and non-native plants, by shading areas otherwise plant free, can also skew sex ratios and even lower hatching rates. Global warming and rising sea level may cause loss of nesting habitat and oil spills pose a threat to the turtles and the molluscs upon which they feed. But the worst threat could well be crab pots. These baited baskets lure crabs that in turn lure turtles, sometimes trapping and drowning 40–50 turtles in one pot. Even "ghost" traps—that is, traps that



Several unfamiliar faces showed at the August meeting because "Alligator Bob" displayed the second alligator captured from the Chicago River in as many weeks. Named Belmont by the press, the three-foot alligator was probably a released pet. It was in good health and Bob will try and find it a good home. With the popularity of reptile pets increasing and the economy still dragging, we may see more animals needing to be adopted. While some obviously cannot be adopted by most people, the CHS knows of many animals that need homes. Looking to acquire a new animal? Let our adoption chairperson know what you're interested in and you can probably save a life while you satisfy your desires. Photograph by Dick Buchholz.



Crab pots take a devastating toll on diamondback terrapins. Photograph by Dr. Joseph A. Butler.



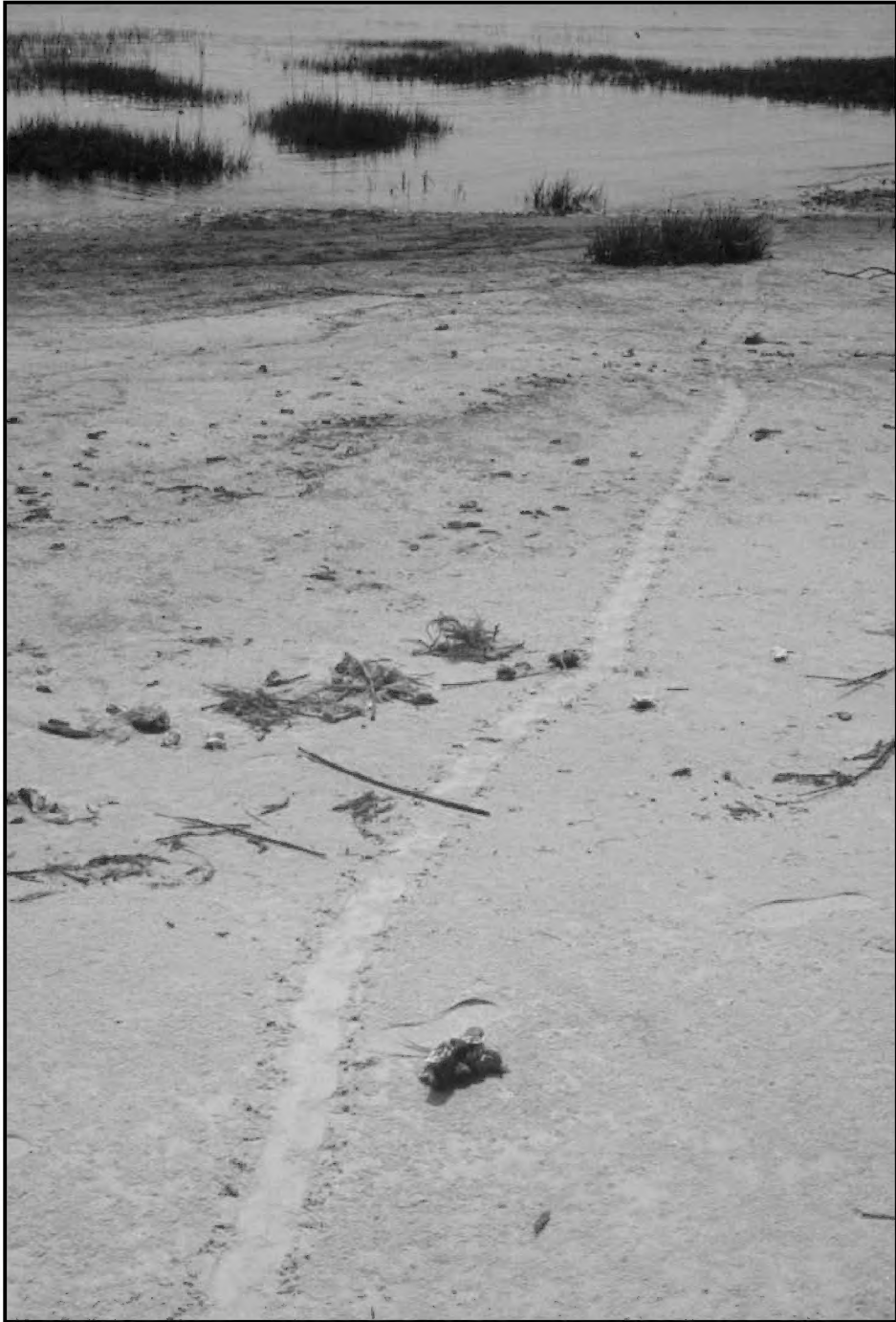
One of George’s primary study subjects, an ornate diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin macrospilota*). Photograph by George L. Heinrich.



George spends much of his time on education. A group of teachers appreciates a Florida box turtle (*Terrapene carolina bauri*). Photograph by George L. Heinrich.



George believes you educate the parents through the children. Two generations are fascinated with a gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Photograph by George L. Heinrich.



Tracks of an ornate diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin macrospilota*) on a beach. Photograph by George L. Heinrich



A loggerhead musk turtle (*Sternotherus m. minor*). Photograph by Timothy J. Walsh.



Bumper sticker advocating a local Florida tradition that poses a real threat to turtle populations. Photograph by George L. Heinrich.



A cheap, easily installed bycatch reduction device can significantly reduce terrapin mortality without decreasing legal crab take. Photograph by George L. Heinrich.

have been lost but still sit on the bottom of the ocean—may continue to trap turtles in staggering numbers for years until they rust away. George is closely involved in efforts to have the state of Florida mandate bycatch reduction devices in crab pots. Studies have shown that this device, a simple and inexpensive wire frame that can be added to existing pots, can significantly reduce turtle mortality without decreasing legal crab harvests. This proposed regulatory change would be one of the greatest single conservation actions Florida Fish and Wildlife could implement to enhance survivability of diamondback terrapins. The state has had the data for five years and the regulations have yet to be passed into law.

George then moved to his research on Suwannee cooters. He stated that while his terrapin research primarily deals with live turtles, his cooter research deals mostly with dead turtles. In 2004 while driving the back roads of Cedar Key, George and a partner came upon a modern-day midden of turtle shells that included at least 164 cooters. For generations certain folks in Florida have hunted and eaten riverine turtles, especially cooters. Purely a cultural tradition, the turtles are not a needed food supply nor even a particularly cheap source of protein, but this consumption is so engrained that festivals are held to celebrate turtles as food. Unfortunately the largest turtles are the most sought after and the take tends to eliminate the oldest and



Dr. Peter Pritchard examining cooter shells (*Pseudemys*) in the driveway of the Chelonian Research Institute. All these shells came from a modern midden of human-consumed turtles. Photograph by Timothy J. Walsh.

most productive of the turtles. It is not just Asians that threaten turtle population by eating them. The enforcement authorities had believed that the Suwannee cooter was not protected until George and his colleagues showed them the species had been state-listed, with no take allowed. It remains to be seen whether the new realization of that fact will have much of an influence on the turtle consumers of Florida.

Studying the shells George noticed that a number of them had scars that had been caused by boat propellers. Such scars are easily identified. Boat propellers have long been studied as a threat to marine mammals, but George and his colleagues wondered what threat boats might be to the fifteen species of Florida's turtles that are partially or wholly riverine. Using data from the midden shells and data from the collections of the Florida Museum of Natural History, George and his coworkers determined that injuries caused by boats are a serious threat to Florida's turtles and that the threat is increasing.

George devoted the last 15 minutes or so of his talk to the many activities that he is involved with. By education and organization, he is gradually improving the lot of Florida's turtles. George Heinrich is no naïve dreamer sitting around waiting for something to happen; he's dedicated much of his life to doing what can be done. A realist, George has a keen sense of the absurd and recognizes that he's not going to win every battle. With that focus I sensed when I first met him, he continues to crusade in many different ways to protect the security and diversity of Florida's turtles. I've referred to George in the singular throughout much of my writing, but George continually used words such as "we" and "colleagues" and "our" when talking about projects and researches being accomplished, rarely using the first person singular. He is entirely modest, and stresses the need to work with other people and groups when trying to accomplish important goals. He strikes me as someone I'd like to be in the field with and George does conduct nature-based tours in Florida. I'm adding links to his website, and links to the organizations that he has formed or helped form. They are definitely worth looking at. Maybe I'll meet you on one of his tours next year.

The group focusing primarily on Florida's nonmarine turtles: Florida Turtle Conservation Trust <ftct.org>

Many of the papers on diamondback terrapins are available in the bibliography here:

Diamondback Terrapin Working Group <dtwg.org>

George's own web site with information about his tours among much else:

Heinrich Ecological Services <heinrichecologicalservices.com>

The Tympanum

Herpetoculture in the 21st Century

(based on the keynote speech presented at the International Herpetological Symposium in Tucson, Arizona, 22 July 2010)

Herpetoculture has evolved and changed dramatically since the widespread successful captive breeding of many herp species began only about 30 to 40 years ago. In the 21st century, herpetoculture has become a significant economic force. Millions of dollars flow into the national economy from herpetoculture. It is interlaced and interconnected with all levels of the economy. It supports manufacturing, contributes to agriculture, and includes tens of thousands of American small businesses. It's estimated that several million people derive at least part of their personal income from herpetoculture.

But the most important contributions and accomplishments of herpetoculture may be to conservation and education.

The herp community has successfully reproduced in captivity a significant percentage of all reptile species, and a smaller but still impressive percentage of amphibian species. It has convincingly demonstrated that essentially all reptiles can be maintained and reproduced in captivity, and that this can be done by private keepers.

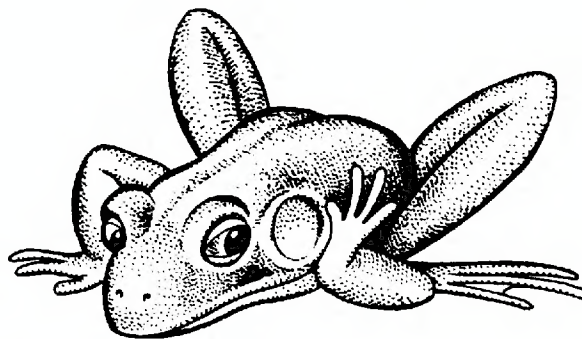
The herp community has documented its unequalled work in the maintenance and captive breeding of an entire class of vertebrate animal; data on the maintenance and reproductive husbandry of hundreds of reptiles are available online and published in magazines, regional publications and books. Even more impressive, the information generated by this endeavor has been shared—the herp community itself promotes the dissemination of the data that has been generated through regional and national meetings, annual symposia, videos, books, and an extensive and well-connected online community.

The herp community of the United States created and now supports viable self-sustaining captive populations of several hundred species of reptiles. This has been accomplished through a decentralized, nongovernmental, economically driven model of conservation. It is American private enterprise that has achieved this very impressive modern goal; not a penny of American taxpayer dollars has been spent in this endeavor.

What is now being attempted around the world for amphibians, wild felines, and many other rare vertebrates, has already been accomplished for reptiles. Reptiles are today more securely established in captivity than any other vertebrate group. This is truly one of the greatest conservation accomplishments of the past 20 years.

Today the vast majority of reptiles held in captivity in the United States are captive-bred animals. These are animals that have not been removed from the wild. The herp community is a producer of captive-bred animals and a protector of reptile species.

We feel that an important, but overlooked contribution of herpetoculture to public education regards the contact children



have with animals. Reptiles brought to classrooms are the only experience that many American children have with live animals. In schools across the United States, the most common animals to visit classrooms are captive reptiles—not dogs, cats, rodents, monkeys, or birds. It is snakes and lizards that are brought to educate and entertain children

more often than any other animals. Reptiles are used to teach lessons not only about animals, but also about the environment, ecology, natural history and conservation.

There are professional lecturers who tour American schools with reptiles. There are zoo-based educational programs that do the same. However, most school-based educational programs are done largely as a courtesy of private herpers; these programs rely on the time and effort of dedicated volunteers who present lectures and demonstrations to school kids, scouts, camps, and other groups of children and adults. This is the largest volunteer educational program involving animals and wildlife in the United States, now ongoing for more than 30 years.

But herpetoculture in the 21st century faces unprecedented and serious problems. At the turn of this century, herpetoculture was an unrecognized industry, politically unorganized and largely politically unaware. It coasted easily into the 21st century under the radar of regulation and legislation. Without any political guidance and without political organization, it never set about creating its own protective regulations. It did receive some political support from the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council [PIJAC], but that came largely as an accidental effect from PIJAC's mission to protect the pet industry. Herpetoculture is not the pet industry, and herpetoculture was never a primary concern of PIJAC.

In this decade we have noticed that the word “pet” has acquired a negative connotation. It's sometimes implied that people with “pets” have a deep need to dominate animals, or they need to express affections that they cannot share with people, or they themselves are needy emotionally. There was a television show on Animal Planet Channel which stated that people with more than six animals in their homes were mentally ill and that maintaining animals was a version of “hoarding.” We state here that we vehemently disagree with such bizarre assessments. This is an insidious tactic that the animal rights organizations are employing, and it is incredibly important to not let these demeaning and unfounded statements go unchallenged. Also, it often goes unsaid that there are valid reasons for keeping animals other than as pets.

At the beginning of this decade we were impressed with the general treatment that herps were receiving in the public eye. Animal Planet Channel, National Geographic TV, Discovery Channel and others were generally supportive and aired generally factual documentaries. We noted that snakes and other herps were being used in advertising images, a very new trend—an issue of *Vogue* or *Vanity Fair* then almost always had at least one advertisement with an artsy image that included a snake.

But a number of complications and impediments to the integration of herps into the public consciousness have arisen. For one thing, the 24-hour-a-day news cycle on cable TV has not been kind to herpetoculture. There simply is not enough real news in which the American public has any interest. The extreme competition between news channels for viewers has placed any and every “animal incident” at the top of the news hour.

On cable television shows, it has worked out like this: programmers realized that people were interested in sharks and snakes, and at first they did documentaries. Then they realized that even more viewers were interested in people being attacked and eaten by sharks and snakes. At some point, the dominant “animal programs” on TV started to have titles like “Venom,” “Bitten,” “I Can’t Believe I Survived,” “Nightmares in Nature” and “The Deadliest Killer Animals.” Interestingly, a major advertiser of this type of show is the Humane Society of the United States, one of the largest and wealthiest animal-rights organizations. Based on the number of advertisements we see on the Animal Planet Channel, it appears that HSUS is an important advertiser to and influence on that channel.

There are two main categories of organizations with agendas to take out herpetoculture. One group is comprised of animal rights, animal welfare, and some environmental organizations. These include a spectrum of organizations that range from militant activists against all animal slavery, to more mild “scientific” organizations that insist that animal-human interactions are unhealthy, or that all exotic species are dangerous to the environment. No matter what you are doing with animals, there are one or more organizations that “speak for animals” that think you are wrong and should be stopped. Their shared agenda is that they want to take animals out of the hands of private citizens and the public.

Several of these groups are well organized, have memberships that number in the hundreds of thousands, annually raise tens of millions of dollars, lobby intensively to restrict or remove animals from public hands at every level of the government in every state, and have major political influence on legislation. Recently CNN hosted an hour show featuring many of the largest animal rights groups in a positive light.

The anti-animal programs often feature high-profile Hollywood personalities and musicians who are more than willing to express their dismay that people actually keep animals. They talk a lot about mistreated animals and they imply that most animals in captivity are horribly treated. It’s our observation that most of these celebrities are poorly informed and have little or no actual experience with animals.

These organizations cite a variety of reasons to support their agendas, ranging from the dangers exotic animals pose to health, safety, and the environment to beliefs in morality, philosophy and ethics. In fact, we can find very little evidence to support their claims of dangers to the public, and only a tiny percent of environmental problems caused by exotic species have been caused by vertebrate animals—plants are far and away the biggest offenders, followed by invertebrates, then followed by aquatic vertebrates. Still, the focus is on terrestrial vertebrates because they are better for fundraising. It really boils down to

groups of zealots very seriously attempting to enact and enforce their values, beliefs, and philosophy on the public through legislation, exactly similar to what fundamentalist religious groups are banned by law from doing.

Animal-rights organizations are supporting what we see as the Culture of Animal Fear. The public is purposely being made to fear animals. They are bombarded with stories on television and pervasively spread throughout the media about the dangers of salmonella, monkey pox, Q fever, brucellosis, rabies, death by constriction, death by envenomation, death by trampling, death by being eaten by your pet Nile monitors (or someone else’s pet Nile monitors). A body of citizens that fears animals can be expected to willingly give up its rights to them.

Perceived danger is different than actual danger—for example, in the United States, if you are a member of the public with no unusual exposure to animals, it’s statistically more likely that you will be killed by your neighbor’s dog, a runaway horse, or elephant than by a python. It’s more likely that you will be killed by a family member, lightning, a handgun, an automobile, or falling in the bathtub than by any sort of reptile. If you are a person who works with elephants, you are far more likely to be killed by an elephant than is a person who works with large pythons likely to be killed by a python. The chances of a random member of the public being killed by a python are roughly the same as that person winning the Texas Jackpot Lottery twice a month for 12 months in a row.

And mention of pythons brings us to the other group of people who appear to be committed to eradicating herpetoculture. That is invasive species biologists. Besides the proposed action to place nine snake species on the Injurious Wildlife List of the Lacey Act, there recently have been several laws proposed and papers published that would seriously and negatively affect the future of herpetoculture. And there have been a significant number of both academic and contract researchers who in the past several years have taken the trouble to announce to the media that invasive pythons and other snakes pose great dangers to the public, and also to the ecosystems of the Southeast and beyond.

In fact, most invasive-species biologists do not act on an actual agenda to eradicate herpetoculture. Rather it is an unfortunate consequence of the science itself. One reason that invasive-species biologists are a tribulation to herpetoculture is that one of their functions is to create ecological risk analyses. This is a fancy way of saying “predicting the future.” One problem with risk analysis is that the deck is stacked in favor of always predicting that a species could become invasive. When the prediction is that a species poses a hazard, the predictor can never be proven wrong—the target species simply has not become a problem yet. But if one assigns low risk, and then the species does go on to be a problem, one is clearly wrong.

Another reason why invasive-species biologists are big trouble for herpetoculture is that they have vested interests in the outcomes of their analyses. A type of law that they particularly favor is the white list / black list type of law. With this type of law, all species are placed by default on a black list, that being the list of animals that cannot be possessed or transported, or

imported, or some other action. In order for a blacklisted species to be placed on the white list, an invasive species biologist must determine the probability that species might create problems in the future. So invasive species biologists naturally tend to think this type of law is a good idea.

There is no better example of invasive-snake biologists affecting herpetoculture than the situation now ongoing with the risk assessments performed by Rodda et al (2008) for Burmese pythons and by Reed and Rodda (2009) for four python species, four anaconda species, and boa constrictors. Both Rodda and Reed are biologists involved with brown treesnake research; Rodda supervises the project for USGS. Both biologists are now working together to place more species on the Injurious Wildlife List. It seems obvious to us that they have a vested commercial and professional interest in seeing more species added to the list.

The brown treesnake, *Boiga irregularis*, at this time is the only snake species on the Injurious Wildlife List. Both authors, Reed and particularly Rodda, have worked on the brown treesnake problem in Guam for years. Over the past 20 years, somewhere around \$100 million of taxpayer money has been spent for research on that species. Rodda and Reed are quick to point out that it was never their object to eradicate the brown treesnake in Guam, only to study it.

These guys are experts at getting money for research on injurious species. The addition of nine more snake species means more money, more grants, more research. Already more than \$3 million have been given to Burmese python research in Florida in which these two are involved, and the species isn't even on the injurious Wildlife List yet. Already Reed and Rodda have made statements that they don't believe that their efforts can eradicate Burmese pythons in the Everglades; they only want to study them.

The action to place these nine snake species on the injurious wildlife list is proposed because of the risk assessments undertaken by these two authors and their predictions that Burmese pythons could spread from coast to coast. We here state that their predictions that climate for Burmese pythons was favorable in Washington DC, Oklahoma City, Organ Pipe Monument, and Utah were absurd.

When we were finally able to examine the climate data set on which all of their analyses, predictions and conclusions are based, we found the data to be corrupt, the analyses and conclusions incorrect (Barker and Barker, 2010). Yes, Burmese pythons are in the Everglades, but the frightening prediction that giant constrictors could and would spread across the United States is baseless.

US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service paid tens of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money for that report. Congressmen and Senators have stood before committees holding the impressively thick 302-page USGS report in their hands and declaring that "this report is all the science that is needed to enact the proposal to add the species to the Injurious Wildlife List." In fact, the report is bogus.

Legislation

In 2009, there was legislation identified as HR669 written and submitted to committee that would have outlawed the importation, transportation, and possession of all vertebrate species except 14 species on a white list. Interestingly, 10 of the 14 species that are on the white list are considered to be problematic invasive species in the United States. As is typical for black list/white list laws, in HR669 an unlisted species is, by default, placed on the black list until invasive species biologists perform risk assessments for that species, and then sign off that the species will not become invasive. Of course, here the problem is that in order to move an animal from the default black list to the white list, the contracted biologist has to, in effect, prove a negative, a logical impossibility. This law is strongly supported by Defenders of Wildlife, HSUS, and the Nature Conservancy; undoubtedly they didn't think it would be passed as written, but apparently they would have been happy with compromises to get the bill on the books. It's always — ALWAYS — easier to modify an existing bill than create a new one and get it passed. While this bill was being considered, six invasive-species biologists (Smith et al., 2009) published an opinion paper in *Science* supporting the need for this bill. This bill was rejected in committee because 50,000 letters from herpers were received by the committee. But the bill is not dead; it is being reworked and it will likely surface again, probably with a much larger white list.

Recently a law has been proposed that would ban the importation of amphibians into the United States unless each animal is certified free of chytrid fungus. This seems particularly ironic considering the problems of amphibians worldwide, including in the United States. This was proposed despite the well-publicized international project known as Amphibian Ark, a desperate effort to save some of the frog species by creating captive viable, self-sustaining populations.

In the past two years there have been actions at the state level throughout the country that are too numerous to list completely, but to mention a few: California entertained a proposal to ban importation, transportation and possession of all amphibians and turtles; Ohio looks like it is going to ban exotic animals because governor Ted Strickland doesn't want HSUS to support an animal welfare initiative that would affect Ohio farmers; Texas decided that its roadsides are wildlife refuges and it's illegal to molest or impede the progress of any herps in the area from the fence on one side of the road to the fence on the other; despite three years of work on a plan for "reptiles of concern" created by multi-agency participants, including representatives of the private community, the Florida legislature chose to completely ignore that plan and passed by unanimous votes (116 to 0 and 35 to 0) a ban on private ownership of any of those species, unless the person is a commercial importer, distributor, or breeder.

Miscellaneous Digressions

The following is a mix of unrelated points that we think are important. These are some of the insights that have come to us in our growing awareness of the problems that will increasingly plague herpetoculture.

- The world is changed from 50 years ago at the beginning of

the Golden Age of Herpetoculture. For one thing, there has been a global human population increase of more than four billion people in that time. In 2011 human population will surpass seven billion. At this time, humans are the most numerous animal species larger than 3 pounds on planet Earth.

- The world is a tough place for most herps, and many species will need to be set up in captivity, or they will be lost. It is great if endangered or extirpated species can be released from captivity into reconstituted ecosystems, but for the most part, re-establishment of exotics species in the wild is a myth. Tigers are one of the greatest examples. It is likely that in the near future, tigers will go extinct in nature, and they will never be re-established. The same seems likely for most species that lose their places in nature. We believe this has finally become obvious in the case of the world's beleaguered frogs and almost all Asian turtles. Either they will be moved into captivity, many forever, or they will be lost to extinction.

For decades, we have advocated the importance of the maintenance of ancillary captive populations of herp species — not for the purpose of release into reconstituted habitats, but more simply and hopefully that our generation could guard them long enough to hand them over to future generations.

- Few private individuals are capable of maintaining colonies of gorillas, okapis, or giraffes. But private keepers can and do maintain colonies of herps, orchids, ferns, cacti, rodents and other small organisms. They should be encouraged to do so, maybe with tax incentives for maintaining endangered organisms. We can best protect what we allow to live with us. It is critical that the zoo herp community and the private herp community come to some understanding and figure out a way to work together. Both communities need each other to do what must be done.

- The saying “Better extinct than only in captivity” has been a mantra for conservationists and their agencies for at least 40 years now. Over the years we have heard this repeated by academics, environmentalists, animal rights people, and conservationists. We find it to be one of the most offensive statements we've ever heard uttered. It has always been our opinion that it is up to us, this generation, to save what we can by any means possible. There are many species that can be maintained in captivity forever, and that seems to us to be the responsibility of our generation. Consider the Asian turtles, a number of which may now exist only in captivity. The disappearing amphibian phenomenon is worldwide. It is our observation that over the course of our lives, we've seen fewer and fewer reptiles right here in the USA.

- It would be a positive move for the US Endangered Species Act to be amended to grant to captive-bred endangered species a different, less strict status, following the example of CITES. One has only to look at the large, captive populations of Fiji iguanas and radiated tortoises in Europe where they are considered CITES II species and are privately owned and captive-bred. They are common and they exist in viable self-sustaining populations. Recently it has been reported that population numbers of radiated tortoises have plummeted in the past decade and the species is on the way to extinction in the wild. Why are U.S.

zoos still freezing eggs instead of hatching them?

- We hear of plans to restore the Everglades region back to its original pristine condition. We are pretty sure that will never happen, not for the Everglades or for any other ecosystem. Ecosystems change, they evolve through time. Conservationists and preservationists need to manage ecosystems into the future, not return them to some imagined snapshot of their past. The Everglades of the past probably could not handle the mercury and Agent Orange that have been dumped on it, the drier conditions, or the fertilizer and pesticides that now flow through it.

It's noteworthy that this year the United Nations added Everglades National Park to its List of World Heritage in Danger. A decrease in water quality and flow due to agricultural and urban development was cited as the main reason for the listing, not pythons. Established exotic species in the Everglades are an issue of concern, no doubt, but consider that the Burmese python is but one of the more than 2400 species of exotic plants and animals that have been found in the Everglades.

It's probably correct to state that every ecosystem in the world has established exotic species. Some exotic species become problems and are then classified as invasive species. However, the effects of most established exotic species on their foreign ecosystems are benign or even beneficial. The public is warned that the deadly Burmese pythons will upset the “delicate” and “fragile” ecosystem of the Everglades. To us, Burmese pythons are more correctly considered as yet one more established exotic species in the ecosystem with the most exotic species in the world. However, the researchers in Florida get more money if they refer to them as invasive species.

- We are disappointed to learn that the Nature Conservancy is no friend of herpetoculture. So far as we can find, they support every law and ordinance restricting herp ownership. Their name and logo appear on the alarming and incorrect National Environmental Council on Invasive Species [NECIS] handout about the dangers of anacondas and pythons. They have given testimony supporting the Reed and Rodda USGS report. Officials of the Nature Conservancy communicated with Reed and Rodda during the preparation of the USGS report and requested that several more pythons and boas be added to the report. In one email, received in the FOIA request filed by USARK, Robert Reed writes to a Nature Conservancy official that they are really going to like this report. As the saying goes, if it looks like a fish and smells like a fish and hangs around with fish, then. . . .

- Considering the numbers of herps that annually are bred in the United States, there is no excuse for the importation of wild-caught herps for the pet trade. The time has come for herpers to support the creation of the Wild Reptile Conservation Act. A separate Wild Amphibian Conservation Act is also important. We propose that these laws be based on the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992. They would ban the importations of large numbers of wild-caught or wild-bred herps for the pet industry. Captive-bred animals could be imported. Small numbers of wild-caught animals necessary for genetic heterogeneity in captive populations could be imported. Scientific specimens could be imported by Zoos and academic institutions. Interstate transport and international exports of herps captive bred in the

United States would be allowed. Commerce in these animals would be allowed.

- Recently a herper friend of ours moved to central Texas. He looked at houses in our area only to learn that the bylaws in every single subdivision allowed a resident ONLY one or two dogs and one or two cats. In some, aquarium fish were okay, but others specified that “aquarium pets” were not allowed. Most subdivisions required pets to be neutered. Herps of any sort were specifically and completely banned. It was illegal in every one to possess a pet mouse. This was the case in more than a dozen subdivisions in a fairly rural area of central Texas—most featuring 5- to 10-acre lots. We were shocked. Few herpers realize the difficulties they will face when they look to purchase a home.

USARK

We have related only a portion of the very negative and very scary things that will increasingly affect herpetoculture this year and in the foreseeable future. Things have never been grimmer, and it seems likely that they will get worse before they get better. So we will now tell you now about the best thing that has happened this past decade. That is USARK.

The United States Association of Reptiles Keepers, better known as USARK, is the political face of herpetoculture. It exists to protect and promote the rights and activities of herp keepers. It is a nonprofit, politically active organization. It is a small organization with a director, officers, and a board of directors. There currently are about 8,000 members, and membership is growing. They have been moderately successful in their fundraising, and they employ three good lobbyists in Washington, D.C. They have an economist under contract to create a formal economic impact assessment of herpetoculture in the United States. They have hired a technical writer, who recently wrote a 66-page “Request for Corrections” that was served to USGS to specify corrections that needed to be made in their report.

USARK was formed in the middle of the greatest problems we all have ever faced. Andrew Wyatt, the director, hit the ground running and USARK has become an effective and fairly formidable force. USARK has forged alliances with many other political groups in Washington, and it has good lines of communications with an increasing number of legislators.

But this is the deal. USARK is YOU. All of you reading this and every herper you know, you need to support USARK. You need to join, you need to get on their email list and you need to pay attention to the info they will send you.

Here is another unfortunate fact of life—not all herpers are created equal in the eyes of the government. What we mean by that is that an email or a letter to USGS or USFWS or DOI from a professional zoo herpetologist, from an academic with a PhD, or from a DVM or a MD is weighed more heavily than a letter from us or from any private herper. Understand that we are not saying we all should stop writing—quite the contrary, it has never been more important for us to flood Washington with our correspondence. What we are saying is that there has been a near silence from zoo professionals and from academics that we

do not understand and that future generations of herpers will never forgive. We need your voices.

We do acknowledge with gratitude that Steve Olson, the AZA vice-president of government affairs, and Rick Schwartz, director of the Nashville Zoo have successfully lobbied the AZA to submit a letter against the proposed listing of the nine constrictor species on the Injurious Wildlife List. Also, we all should be grateful to Elliott Jacobsen and Dale DeNardo for their efforts when they and 8 colleagues signed a letter severely criticizing the quality of the USGS report.

We’ve had people tell us “maybe I don’t want to support USARK, maybe I want to support another group” and we say to them, “you name a group that is better suited and working harder and we’ll support them.” But we’re here declaring that USARK is the best we have, it’s the best political organization we herpers have ever had, it’s all we have and if we don’t support it, then the younger keepers in the herp community will live to see the end of herpetoculture.

The Future of Herpetoculture

In conclusion: Americans are losing their animals. It’s not just reptiles, although they often are specifically targeted. Little by little, piece by piece, the rights to keep animals are being nibbled away. Today most Americans live in large cities, away from nature, alienated from animals other than small dogs and occasional cats. The average American simply doesn’t realize that his or her right to maintain animals is being systematically challenged and erased. Regulations to remove animals from all Americans are often framed as being for public safety, public health, or protection to the environment—this all sounds reasonable and desirable to a populace that has little interest and no experience with animals.

As the general population loses contact with animals, it begins to fear animals. The public is constantly being told that animals can cause injury, disease, and even death. However, with the removal of animals from society comes a loss of support for zoos, parks, conservation and environmental organizations. There results a general loss of curiosity about and knowledge of the natural world. People cannot be expected to love, respect, or support that which they have never experienced.

There are forces at play that seek to criminalize the captivity of all animals. Primarily because of our lack of political organization in the past, the herp community has been among the easiest targets. The past decade clearly shows a general trend of slow and insidious increases of restrictive regulations at every level of government throughout the country. City by city, county by county, state by state, anti-animal laws and ordinances have been methodically enacted across the USA. Agricultural guidelines turn into dangerous animal ordinances that turn into exotic animal ordinances that then become animal bans. It’s death by a thousand cuts.

USARK must receive the united support of the herp community in order to be able to protect our rights to maintain animals into the future. The future of herpetoculture is ours to shape, but we must organize. The herp community has the political power to deflect whatever happens to be the latest attempt to increase

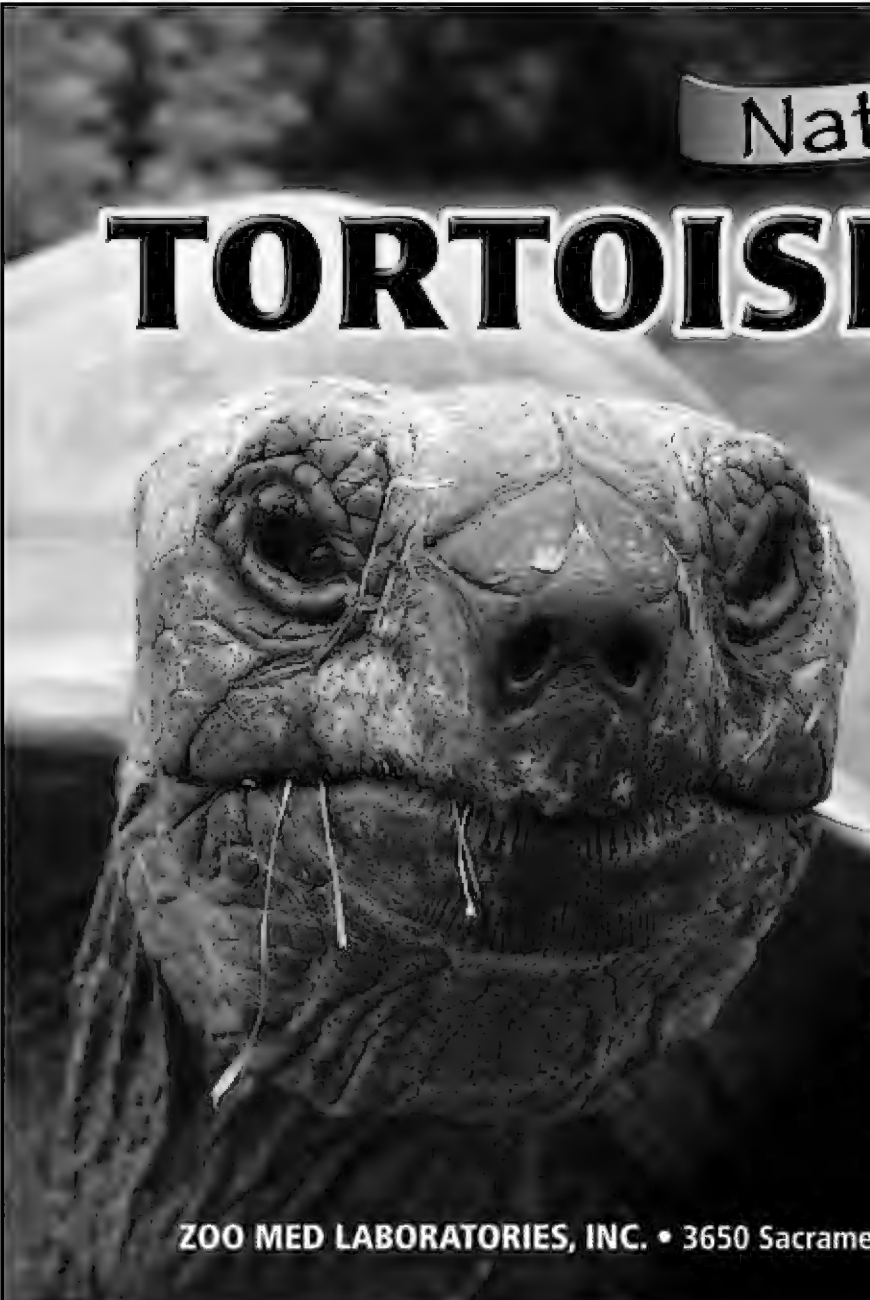
popularity ratings by Congress or the media, but we must learn how to effectively wield that power through USARK. All persons with interests in live captive-bred reptiles and amphibians should join USARK and actively support it.

The day has come when political apathy is no longer an option.

Only united behind USARK can the herp community chart a secure course to a future where the efforts and accomplishments of this devoted community are appreciated, honored, and encouraged. **David G. Barker and Tracy M. Barker, vpi@beecreek.net**

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Herpetology 2010

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

MOUNTAIN BROOK NEWTS

C. Schneider and W. Schneider [2010, *Herpetozoa* 23(1/2): 59-69] present observations on the ecology and distribution of the little known mountain brook newts, *Neurergus strauchii* (Steindachner, 1887) and *Neurergus crocatus* Cope, 1962, made during two herpetological trips to east Turkey in spring 2008 and 2009. The authors discuss ecological parameters of inhabited streams, which cause differences in the seasonal use of brooks by *N. strauchii*. The duration of the aquatic period of *N. strauchii* and the general suitability of brooks for this newt seemed to be dependent on the water temperature. The surrounding vegetation, especially its shading effect directly along the brookside played an essential role. Furthermore a new locality for *N. crocatus* close to the city of ^a emdinli, district of Hakkari, is presented. Besides the population's habitat and the animal's appearance, a sexual dimorphism in the tail coloration of adult *N. crocatus* is described for the first time.

GILA MONSTER GROWTH

J. J. Smith et al. [2010, *J. Herpetology* 44(3):484-488] fit asymptotic models to growth data of free-ranging Gila monsters studied near Tucson, Arizona. A mixed-effects modeling procedure was used that allows for unequal numbers of recaptures by accounting for within-individual covariance and models between-individual variation in growth parameters as random effects. A model selection procedure and diagnostic tests indicated that a von Bertalanffy curve with seasonal cessation of growth and a random effect for asymptotic size fit the data best. Young Gila monsters in the study grew faster than previously reported growth rates from both field and captive animals, and potential reasons for this discrepancy are discussed.

FIRE ANTS AS EGG PREDATORS

S. Diffie et al. [2010, *J. Herpetology* 44(2):294-296] allowed red imported fire ant colonies access in the laboratory to eggs of eight reptilian and one avian species. The ants were allowed to forage on the eggs for approximately one week each after which the eggs were removed from the foraging arenas. Evaluations of the impact of fire ant foraging on the eggs were made daily, and final evaluations were made upon removal from the arenas. Red imported fire ants were not able to penetrate healthy bobwhite quail eggs, the only avian species used in this trial. The foraging ants were able to penetrate the eggs of diamondback terrapins, yellowbelly sliders, eastern painted turtles, and loggerhead sea turtles but were not able to penetrate the eggs of Florida softshell turtles or musk turtles. The ants were able to enter the eggs of Burmese pythons and yellow rat snakes. Results from this study suggest red imported fire ants may have a more prominent role in the decline of native reptilian species than was previously thought. Further studies, especially in the field, are necessary to determine the true impact

NEW PYGMY SALAMANDER

E. J. Crespi et al. [2010, *Herpetologica* 66(3):283-295] revise the taxonomic status of *Desmognathus wrighti*, which occurs in the southern Appalachians of western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and southwest Virginia, based on a combination of genetic, ecological, and morphometric analyses. Previously, these authors reported fixed differences in allozymic loci and mitochondrial DNA sequences between lineages geographically divided by the French Broad River basin at the level of species divergence. Here, they show that these two lineages also differ in ventral pigmentation and several measures of body size, including snout-vent length, body condition, and head width. In addition, spatially explicit ecological-niche analyses of climate at more than 400 collection localities spanning the range of *D. wrighti* indicate that the lineages separated by the French Broad River are in unique environmental niche space. Ecological niche models resolved that population localities north of the river were generally colder and drier than localities to the south, which suggests that divergent selection pressures may exist, in addition to isolation by distance, to drive the diversification of these two lineages. The name *Desmognathus wrighti* (King, 1936), for which the type locality is Mt. LeConte within the Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee, was retained for all populations south and west of the French Broad River, while the name *D. organi* (northern pygmy salamander), with type locality at Whitetop Mountain, Virginia, was given to those populations north and east of the river.

HERPETOFAUNA OF ALONISSOS

M. F. Broggi [2010, *Herpetozoa* 23(1/2):71-78] briefly describes the natural history of the island of Alonissos in the Northern Sporades, Greece. The existing herpetological literature is presented and the new finds listed, namely *Pelophylax ridibundus*, *Testudo marginata*, *Telescopus fallax* and *Zamenis situla*. A melanistic snake, presumably *Dolichophis caspius*, was also found. A total of 13 species of amphibians and reptiles has been reported for Alonissos.

LIFE CYCLE OF ROSENBERG'S GOANNA

P. D. Rismiller et al. [2010, *J. Herpetology* 44(3):399-408] have observed and recorded seasonal life cycles of individual free-ranging Rosenberg's goannas, *Varanus rosenbergi*, for 16 years. These monitors are normally solitary except during their summer breeding cycle. Activities and behaviors were documented from precourtship through to pairing, courtship, copulation, selecting and excavating an incubation chamber, egg laying and finally guarding the egg mound before returning to a solitary life style. The sequence of breeding activities tends to follow a set pattern, but the timing and duration of physical and physiological events vary from year to year. Courtship through to defending the egg mound occupies up to 4 months, commencing just before the summer solstice and ending shortly after the autumn equinox.

Unofficial Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, August 13, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 P.M. at the Schaumburg Public Library. Board members Lawrence Huddleston, Deb Krohn, Cindy Rampacek and Jenny Vollman were absent.

Officers' Reports

Recording Secretary: Cindy Rampacek was absent. The July minutes were read, corrected and accepted.

Treasurer: The financial report was presented, discussed and accepted.

Membership Secretary: Mike Dloogatch read a list of memberships expiring this month.

Sergeant-at-arms: The attendance at the July meeting was 55. Dick lost his big stick. Regardless, he says behavior has shown vast improvement at monthly meetings.

Committee Reports

Shows:

- Unity Fest, September 11, Marquette Park. It's a big back-to-school event run by the city.

- Meet the Creek (Salt Creek), Brookfield, September 18

SEWERFest: Their auction raised \$600. There was also several hundred raised for a sea turtle rescue.

Wisconsin State Fair: Cindy worked five straight days with help from Dick, Bob and John. Bob stopped by with the infamous newly captured celebrity alligator. Dick's nephew noticed that there were a lot more girls in attendance than boys. Donations were abundant and a ball python was successfully adopted out.

Worth Days: Rick Hoppenrath worked this event and all went well.

Notebaert Picnic: Went well. Good turnout on Sunday, but we're still having trouble getting help for Saturdays.

Health Fair: Bob and John made a good impression on the kids and the alderman of the 2nd Ward.

Nominating Committee: Everything is progressing well according to chairman Jason Hood

Old Business

Museum of Science and Industry: The controversial waiver was eventually signed and according to Dick, the show went well.

Dick, along with Jenny and Bob worked the event.

Bob secured three snake cages for Chicago Animal Control from Jim Foster.

New Business

Rick Hoppenrath has resigned as vice-president due to health/personal issues. The board moved and voted to have Linda Malawy take over as vice-president for the remainder of the year. The board also moved and voted to have Jessican Tschampa replace Linda as a member-at-large.

Massasauga Fund: John read a moving thank-you letter from Mike Dreslik regarding the Massasauga Fund.

Ideas for Fundraising: Dick had an idea involving engraved glasses or mugs and Mike Scott brought up the idea of custom embroidered patches.

Herp art: Jessica and John brought up an idea (which was also discussed with the Notebaert) about compiling a portfolio of herp-related art for a possible "gallery showing" at the Notebaert or perhaps even other museums.

Location! Location! Location!: John mentioned that there is a slight chance that the board will no longer be able to hold meetings at the Schaumburg Library. This will no doubt be discussed further when more is known.

Round Table

Bob mentioned his concerns about media "happenings" (alligator captures) and how we should go about being as discreet as possible.

Aaron finally got his house! (Congratulations Aaron!)

Jim enjoyed the Museum of Natural History and the Bronx Zoo on his trip to New York in July. Mike was reminded of some photos he recently saw of the new reptile house at the Staten Island Zoo.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 P.M.

*Respectfully submitted by Jim Foster for recording secretary
Cindy Rampacek*



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For sale: Australia books. *Australian Reptile & Frogs* by Raymond T. Hoser, 1989, 238 8½ × 11½" pp., 631 color photos of herps and their habitats, range maps, bibliography, info on captive husbandry, conservation, reptile photography, DJ, hardbound, \$99; *Lizards of Western Australia: III. Geckos and Pygopods* by Storr, Smith and Johnstone, 1990, published by Western Australia Museum, 141 pp., 20 color plates with 4–6 color photos each, description, distribution, habitat, and derivation of scientific name for the 81 species of geckos and pygopods found in Western Australia, softbound, \$80; *Wildlife of Western Australia* by Peter Slater and Eric Lindgren, 1966, 127 pp., 1–4 color photos on nearly every page, includes mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians (15 pp.), and invertebrates, DJ, hardbound, \$20; *The Snakes of Victoria* by John Coventry and Peter Robertson, 1991, 70 pp., many color photos, range maps, keys, 6 figs.; descriptions and natural history info, published by Museum of Victoria (Australia), softbound, \$35; *Australian Snakes and Lizards* (Australian Wildlife Series), 1981, 51 pp., many good color photos, covers all 5 of Australia's lizard families plus snakes, including the taipan and death adder, hardbound, \$22. Books in excellent condition. \$3 postage and handling for orders under \$25, free for orders \$25 or more. William Turner, 7395 S. Downing Circle W., Centennial, CO 80122. Telephone: (303) 795-5128; e-mail: toursbyturner@aol.com

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ReptileFest 2011, April 9, 10

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, September 29, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. **Drs. Stephen L. Barten and Gery Herrmann** will give a program about the herps and other creatures they encountered on their recent trip to mainland Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. In June 2010, Steve and Gery traveled with a group of fellow veterinarians to Ecuador. They spent three nights in the rain forest of eastern Ecuador, seeing the abundant local wildlife including herps, birds, monkeys and insects. The group then flew to the Galapagos Islands, where they boarded a ship, visited 10 of the islands and saw giant tortoises, land and marine iguanas, lava lizards, three of the four endemic snake species, and many birds, sea lions, insects and fish. Their presentation will showcase descriptions and hundreds of photos of the native wildlife and scenery. Both Steve and Gery are longtime CHS members, and both have been enthusiastic field herpers all their lives.

At the October 27 meeting **Dr. Karen L. Eckert** will speak on "Sea Turtle Conservation in the Caribbean Sea." Dr. Eckert is executive director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network).

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society take place at Chicago's newest museum—the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. Many CTA bus routes are within walking distance.

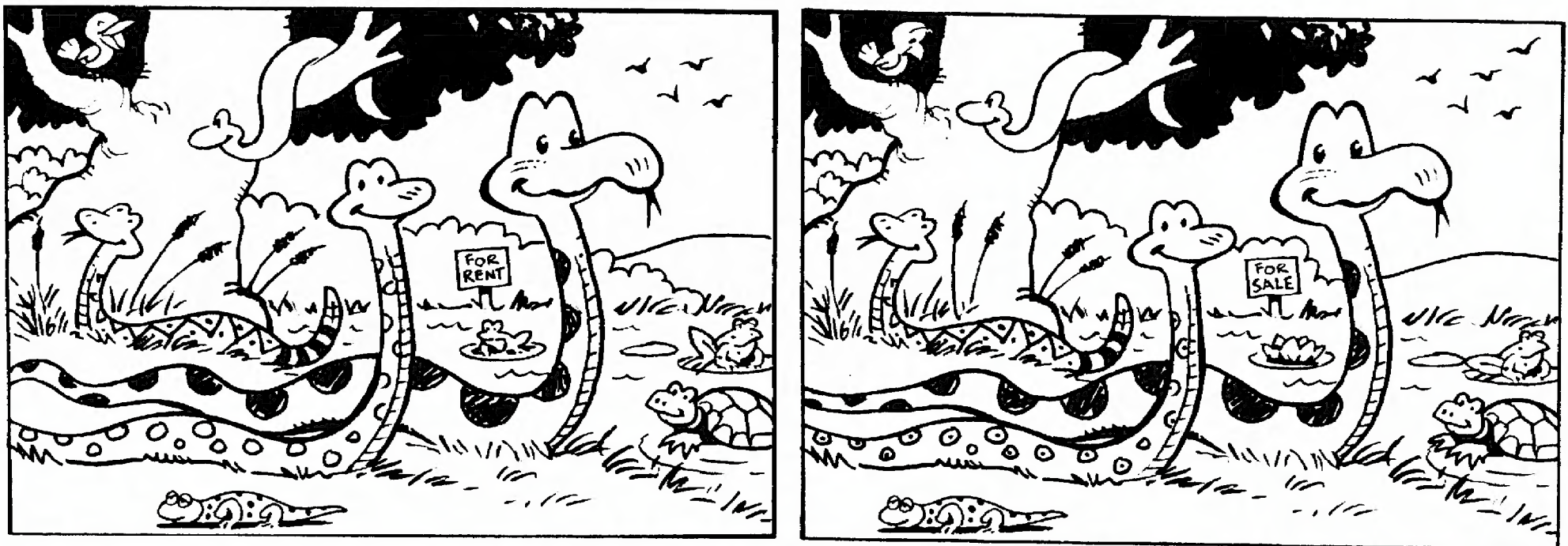
Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the next board meeting, to be held at 7:30 P.M., October 15, in the conference room on the second floor of the Schaumburg Township District Library, 130 S. Roselle Road, Schaumburg.

The Chicago Turtle Club

The monthly meetings of the Chicago Turtle Club are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome. Meetings normally take place at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. Parking is free. For more info visit the CTC website: <http://chicagoturtle.org/>.

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